

FROM THE BOOKSHELF NO. 140
AKOSH CHERNUSH

MAY 11, 1976

LENIN IN ZURICH BY ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU ANOTHER IN THE SERIES ...
FROM THE BOOKSHELF ... IN WHICH WE REPORT ON BOOKS
AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY, AKOSH CHERNUSH'S REPORT
ON LENIN IN ZURICH BY ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN, PUBLISHED
BY FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX. HERE IS BOOK
EDITOR _____.

EDITOR: IN THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES DURING THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES,
DESTALINIZATION WAS THE FASHION. NOW, ALEXANDER
SOLZHENITSYN IN HIS NEW HISTORICAL NOVEL, LENIN IN
ZURICH EMBARKS ON A PROCESS OF DE-LENINIZATION OF
A MYTH. HIMSELF EXILED IN ZURICH, SOLZHENITSYN DOES
NOT CONDEMN HIS PROTAGONIST AS HARSHLY NOR WITH
AS MUCH PASSION AS HE DID STALIN IN HIS PREVIOUS
BOOKS. FROM THIS NEW WORK WE LEARN THAT HE CONSIDERS
LENIN A BRILLIANT TACTICIAN, WHO, ALONG WITH HIS
INTELLECTUAL MERITS, HAD HIS OWN HUMAN WEAKNESSES.
SOLZHENITSYN'S LENIN IS SOMETIMES ARROGANT AND
INTOLERANT TOWARD HIS FELLOW COMRADES AND TOWARD
WOMEN. IN THE CURRENT VERNACULAR HE WOULD BE CALLED
A MALE CHAUVINIST. LENIN, WHO SOMETIMES LIVED WITH
TWO WOMEN UNDER THE SAME ROOF, HIS WIFE AND HIS
MISTRESS, BELIEVED THAT "A WOMAN CAN NEVER GIVE
HERSELF A HUNDRED PERCENT TO THE PARTY; SHE'S
ALWAYS UP TO SOME NONSENSE."

EDITOR:

(CONT'D) ALL IN ALL, HOWEVER, SOLZHENITSYN'S PORTRAIT OF LENIN IS, FOR THE WESTERN READER, IF NOT PARTICULARLY LIKEABLE, NOT ANTIPATHETICAL EITHER. LENIN IN ZURICH, PART OF A LENGTHY TRILOGY, THE FIRST OF WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN PUBLISHED, DEALS WITH THE COLLAPSE OF TSARIST RUSSIA DURING WORLD WAR I AND THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER.

WE MEET LENIN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOK, FIRST IN POLAND IN 1914, THEN IN SWITZERLAND. HIS HEALTH IS NOT THE BEST; HE HAS ALREADY HAD SEVERAL NERVOUS BREAKDOWNS. LEFT BEHIND IN RUSSIA IS A COMPLETELY DISORGANIZED AND DEMORALIZED ILLEGAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. AT TIME HE CONTEMPLATES GIVING UP THE CAUSE AND EMIGRATING TO AMERICA. YET HE FEARS HE WOULD BE INCAPABLE OF ACTION IN THE UNITED STATES. HE BELIEVES THAT AMERICA IS GETTING TOO PROSPEROUS, THAT THE UPPER STRATUM OF THE WORKING CLASS WOULD PREFER, AS HE SAYS, TO GET RICHER THAN TO MAKE THE REVOLUTION.

IN EUROPE WORLD WAR ONE GOES ON. LENIN READS THE WORK OF CLAUSEWITZ AND THE WAR BULLETINS IN ZURICH'S LIBRARIES. SOLZHENITSYN TRACES THAT TASK:

VOICE: "THE NEWSPAPERS OFTEN GAVE FIGURES OF RUSSIAN CASUALTIES. LENIN ALWAYS LOOKED FOR THESE FIGURES AND MADE A NAIL MARK BY THEM -- WITH SURPRISE AND

VOICE:

(CONT'D) SATISFACTION. THE BIGGER THE FIGURES, THE HAPPIER THEY MADE HIM: ALL THESE SOLDIERS KILLED, WOUNDED, OR TAKEN PRISONER WERE STAKES FALLING OUT OF ABSOLUTISM'S FENCE, LEAVING THE MONARCHY WEAKER. BUT AT THE SAME TIME THESE FIGURES DROVE HIM TO DESPAIR: NO PEOPLE ON EARTH WERE SO LONG-SUFFERING AND SO DEVOID OF SENSE AS THE RUSSIANS. THEIR PATIENCE KNEW NO BOUNDS. ANY ABOMINATION, ANY FILTH DISHED OUT TO THEM THEY WOULD LAP UP WITH NOTHING BUT REVERENT GRATITUDE TOWARD THEIR BELOVED BENEFACTOR."

EDITOR: ULTIMATELY LENIN DECIDES THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BRING ABOUT A REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA IS TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD WAR INTO A CIVIL WAR. TO ACHIEVE THIS, HE THINKS, ONLY GERMANY CAN HELP. LENIN GIVES OUT A NEW DIRECTIVE: THE BOLSHEVIKS MUST NOT CONSIDER GERMANY AS SIMPLY ANOTHER IMPERIALIST POWER, FOR AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT GERMANY COULD BECOME A POWERFUL ALLY OF RUSSIAN BOLSHEVISM.

MEANWHILE IN GERMANY, ALEXANDER HELPHAND, OR PARVUS TO CALL HIM BY HIS REVOLUTIONARY NAME, COMES TO THE SAME CONCLUSION. PARVUS WAS ONCE A HERO OF THE 1905 RUSSIAN UPRISING WHO SPENT SOME YEARS IN EXILE IN SIBERIA FOR HIS ACTIVITIES AND THEN CAME TO THE WEST. FOR A WHILE HE IS THE RESPECTED PUBLICIST OF THE GERMAN SOCIALISTS. THEN HE BECOMES A BUSINESSMAN --

EDITOR:
(CONT'D) A SUCCESSFUL ONE, A MILLIONAIRE. SOON PARVUS IS AN ADVISER AND SECRET AGENT OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT. LENIN, WHO HIGHLY ESTEEMS HIS INTELLIGENCE, AT TIMES FINDS HIS POLITICAL IDEAS AND PREDICTIONS SOMEWHAT BIZARRE AS SOLZHENITSYN WRITES:

VOICE: "SOMETIMES ... HE TALKED THE WILDEST NONSENSE: ABOUT EUROPE AS A WHOLE DECLINING AND GETTING CAUGHT IN A VISE BETWEEN AMERICA AND RUSSIA; ABOUT RUSSIA NEEDING ONLY SCHOOLS AND FREEDOM TO BECOME A SECOND AMERICA. ANOTHER TIME, SHOWING SCANT RESPECT FOR THE CENTRAL TENETS OF MARXISM, HE HAD SUGGESTED THAT PRIVATE INDUSTRY SHOULD NOT BE NATIONALIZED, BECAUSE IT MIGHT PROVE UNPROFITABLE. THEN THERE WAS HIS GROTESQUE FANTASY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A SOCIALIST PARTY WINNING POWER ONLY TO TURN IT AGAINST THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE AND SUPPRESS THE TRADE UNIONS."

EDITOR: PARVUS OFFERS MONEY TO LENIN FOR THE EXECUTION OF HIS REVOLUTIONARY PLANS. HE SEES NOBODY ELSE ON THE SCENE WHO CAN BETTER SERVE GERMANY'S INTERESTS THAN LENIN. ONCE IN POWER, LENIN CAN PULL RUSSIA OUT OF THE WAR. THE GERMAN BUSINESSMAN ALSO LIKES THE FACT THAT LENIN DREAMS ABOUT THE DISMEMBERMENT OF RUSSIA AND BELIEVES THAT POLAND, THE UKRAINE, THE CAUCASUS AND THE BALTIC PROVINCES MUST BE GRANTED INDEPENDENCE. PARVUS KNOWS THAT LENIN WANTS TO

EDITOR:
(CONT'D) ESTABLISH A NEW ECONOMIC STRUCTURE IN RUSSIA; HE BELIEVES SOCIALIST METHODS CAN SLOW DOWN RUSSIA'S INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT. FOR THEM THIS MEANS GERMAN CAPITAL WILL HAVE ONE LESS RIVAL.

THE BOLSHEVIK CAUSE IS SUPPORTED NOT ONLY BY PARVUS, WHO ESTABLISHES SECRET CONTACT BETWEEN LENIN AND THE GERMAN CHIEF OF STAFF, BUT ALSO BY THE GERMAN LEADERSHIP. SOLZHENITSYN QUOTES IN LENIN III ZURICH A TOP SECRET GERMAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS DOCUMENT WHICH REVEALS THE POSITIONS OF SOME INFLUENTIAL GERMANS TOWARD THE RUSSIAN BOLSHEVIKS IN 1917:

VOICE: "WE MUST NOW DEFINITELY TRY TO CREATE THE UTMOST CHAOS IN RUSSIA. TO THIS END WE MUST AVOID ANY DISCERNIBLE INTERFERENCE IN THE COURSE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION. BUT WE MUST SECRETLY DO ALL WE CAN TO AGGRAVATE THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE MODERATE AND THE EXTREME PARTIES, SINCE WE ARE EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN THE VICTORY OF THE LATTER, FOR ANOTHER UPIREAVAL WILL THEN BE INEVITABLE, AND WILL TAKE FORMS WHICH WILL SHAKE THE RUSSIAN STATE TO ITS FOUNDATIONS ..."

EDITOR: IN YEARS PAST SOME WESTERN HISTORIANS HAVE ALLEGED THAT LENIN WAS ONCE A GERMAN AGENT. SOLZHENITSYN CONTRADICTS THIS ALLEGATION. ACCORDING TO HIS DOCUMENTARY NOVEL, EVEN IF LENIN ACCEPTED THE

EDITOR:

(CONT'D) GERMAN GOVERNMENT'S SEALED TRAIN TO TAKE HIM HOME,
HE REFUSED TO ACCEPT GERMAN MONEY OR ARMS.
SOLZHENITSYN'S LENIN HAS CLEVERLY USED THE GERMANS
IN ORDER TO SEIZE POWER AS THE GERMANS USED HIM TO
OVERTHROW THE TSARIST REGIME.

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN'S NEW BOOK IS A HIGHLY
ORIGINAL EXPERIMENT IN HISTORICAL FICTION. LENIN IN
ZURICH IS A LUCID, ACCESSIBLE, WELL-RESEARCHED NOVEL
AND MAKES ENORMOUSLY INTERESTING READING.

ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO FROM THE BOOKSHELF. THE
WEEKLY VOICE OF AMERICA REPORT ON NEW BOOKS AMERICANS
ARE READING. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT _____ (AT THIS
TIME) FOR ANOTHER SELECTION -- FROM THE BOOKSHELF.

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